

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 02023 211821Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----102819 211822Z /41

R 211904Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4654

S E C R E T PARIS 02023

NODIS

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-3
TAGS: IT FR US
SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION - CONSULTATIONS WITH ALLIES

REF: A) STATE 8959 B) PARIS 1156

1. FOLLOWING INTERIM CONVERSATION WITH FRANCOIS-PONCET REPORTED REF B, I MET WITH HIM JANUARY 19 TO CONVEY POINTS OUTLINED DEPARTMENT'S REFTEL A.
2. FRANCOIS-PONCET EVIDENTLY REVIEWED THE ITALIAN ISSUE WITH GISCARD BEFORE RECEIVING ME. HE BEGAN BY VOLUNTEERING THAT THERE WERE INDEED SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION AS BETWEEN THE QUAI AND THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN ROME. THE FORMER, BEING FARTHER REMOVED, REMAINS CONVINCED THAT THE ITALIANS WILL CONTINUE TO MUDDLE THROUGH AND THAT ANDREOTTI WILL SOMEHOW MANAGE TO SUSTAIN HIS TIGHT-ROPE ACT.
3. GISCARD, ON THE OTHER HAND, LIKE THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN ROME, TENDS TO BE MORE CONSERVATIVE AND ASSESSES THE ITALIAN SITUATION WITH CONSIDERABLE

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SERIOUSNESS. WHILE EVEN ELYSEE HAD CONSIDERED PARTS OF QUAI'S PUBLIC REACTION TO THE US STATEMENT TOO SOFT, THERE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN NO CHANGE IN ELYSEE'S INTRINSIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE DANGERS OF CP PARTICIPATION IN A GOI. FRANCOIS-PONCET ILLUSTRATED POINT BY RECITING HOW, IN EVERY FRENCH LOCALITY, GREATER CP ACTIVISM AND TACTICAL

PERSEVERANCE AND AGILITY SERVE AS A CONSTANT
REMINDER OF THE THREAT THEY POSE.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, FRANCOIS-PONCET WAS VERY
RESTRAINED AS TO THE HELP FRENCH COULD OFFER AS
A RESULT OF THEIR CURRENT PRE-ELECTORAL CONSTRAINTS.
CERTAINLY, HE STRESSED AGAIN, THE ELYSEE WAS
CONCERNED. WHATEVER HAD BEEN SAID PUBLICALLY
BY GOF ABOUT THE US STATEMENT HAD BEEN SAID FOR
DOMESTIC REASONS. AND THE GOF'S COMMENTS WERE
IN ANY CASE NOT INTENDED AS A CRITICISM OF
PRESIDENT CARTER'S APPROACH TOWARD ITALY; ALTHOUGH THE
ELYSEE DID HAVE THE IMPRESSION FROM CERTAIN CONTACTS
WITH HIGH-LEVEL US OFFICIALS LAST SPRING THAT WE WERE
THEN A SHADE MORE RELAXED ABOUT EUROCOMMUNISM. BE THAT
AS IT MAY, FRANCOIS-PONCET ADMITTED THAT THE US STATE-
MENT MIGHT HAVE HAD A USEFUL BRAKING EFFECT IN ITALY.
ON THE OTHER HAND, STATEMENTS CAN AT BEST ONLY
POSTPONE THE EVIL DAY, WHICH WILL COME UNLESS THE UNDER-
LYING CAUSES OF THE ITALIAN PROBLEM ARE RESOLVED.

4. FOR THE PRESENT THE FRENCH THEMSELVES DID NOT KNOW
WHAT MORE MIGHT USEFULLY BE DONE. EVEN DISCREET FRENCH
ACTIONS RAN THE RISK OF BEING LEAKED IN THE PRESENT
SUPERCHARGED POLITICAL CLIMATE AND SO COULD CAUSE
GISCARD SERIOUS POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT. FOR NOW,
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THEREFORE, AT LEAST THERE WAS NOT TOO MUCH WE SHOULD
EXPECT THE FRENCH TO DO.

5. IN CONCLUDING I ASKED FRANCOIS-PONCET WHAT THE
CIRCUMSTANCES HAD BEEN IN IVORY COAST UNDER WHICH
GISCARD'S COMMENT ON NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL
AFFAIRS HAD BEEN MADE IN LIGHT OF ABIDJAN'S 6969.
HE SAID STORY COULD BE TRUE, BUT THAT HE COULD
NOT CLARIFY. WHATEVER ORIGINS OF STATEMENT IT WAS
THE IMPACT OF VERSION CIRCULATED HERE WHICH
COUNTS.

6. COMMENT: EVIDENTLY ELYSEE AGREES TO SERIOUSNESS
OF ITALIAN SITUATION BUT, FOR DOMESTIC REASONS,
FEELS THAT ITS HANDS ARE TIED. EVEN SO WE WOULD
NOT BE SURPRISED IF GISCARD MIGHT STILL TAKE
CERTAIN PERSONAL STEPS IN ROME WITHOUT TELLING US
OR MIGHT WANT TO GO OVER WHOLE ITALIAN PROBLEM
WHEN HE MEETS WITH SCHMIDT IN FEBRUARY 5-6
FRANCO-GERMAN SUMMIT.

7. FOR SS: PLEASE PASS ROME, USNATO, BONN.
GAMMON

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ALLIANCE, GOVERNMENT REACTION, MEETINGS, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMMUNISTS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PARIS02023
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850103-2086, N780001-0691
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780137/aaaabewy.tel
Line Count: 116
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: aa0c25e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 STATE 8959, 78 PARIS 1156
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3734883
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITALIAN SITUATION - CONSULTATIONS WITH ALLIES
TAGS: PINT, PREL, IT, FR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/aa0c25e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014